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What You'll Hear On The Threat

BY PETER SAMUEL

The Reagan administration this week will make public much of its latest estimate of Soviet strategic developments as presented in classified form in a new national intelligence estimate. Director of Central Intelligence William Casey and national intelligence officer Gary Gershwin are to deliver some of the key judgments on Wednesday morning at a joint hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee and the Senate Appropriations subcommittee.

Defense Week reported some of the findings of the new intelligence estimate (June 17, 1985), and more detail has now been made available by an informed source.

The CIA reports that the Soviets are presently deploying 100 SS-24 ICBMs and 200 SS-25s. The SS-24 is a 10-warhead rail-mobile system; otherwise it resembles the MX. The SS-25 is similar in size to the Minuteman III, carrying three warheads, but is mounted on a wheeled vehicle for mobility.

The CIA estimates that some 150 SS-17 missiles will be replaced by silo-based SS-24s and that 200 rail mobile SS-24s will be deployed by the end of the decade. The projection is for 800 SS-25s by 1990. Both systems will have rapid multiple reload and refire capability. There is heavy camouflage and concealment of SS-24 and SS-25 deployments.

The estimate reports "new evidence" that the SS-24 has more throw-weight than the SS-19 and is therefore a very heavy missile.

Flight testing is about to begin of the giant SS-X-26 and the large SS-X-27, regarded as follow-ons to the SS-18 and the SS-19 missiles respectively. In addition, an improved version of the liquid fuelled SS-18, the Soviet's largest missile, is being reported. Modifications to the test versions of the SS-24 and SS-25 have been sighted.

In the submarine branch of the Soviet triad, a new Delta IV boat is reported carrying the long-range SS-N-23 which is said to be in mass production now. In addition to the two Delta IV craft launched, four more are under construction.

Four Typhoon submarines are under construction. One stretched Yankee class submarine converted for cruise missiles is expected to be operational later this year, carrying the supersonic and long-range SSC-N-24 cruise missiles. Modification to the current generation of submarine launched ballistic missiles, the SS-N-18, SS-N-20 and SS-N-23 will begin flight tests late this year.

Forty Bear H Tu-95 bombers carrying the long range AS-15 air launched cruise missile are produced, and another 100 are expected over the course of this year and next. Older Bears are being equipped with the AS-4 air-to-ground missile.

The inventory of Backfire bombers is put at 260 and production is expected to continue at the present rate of slightly over 30 annually into the 1990s. The B-1B equivalent Blackjack bomber plant is nearly complete and production is expected to begin later this year, at the same rate as the Backfire, about 30 a year.

Over 3,000 long-range cruise missiles for air, ground, and sea launch are expected to be deployed by 1990.

Three thousand is also the number projected for mobile ABM missiles to be deployed before the end of the decade as part of a nationwide ground based ballistic missile defense. This will include the ABM-3 system and SA-10s and SA-12s (which are primarily air defense missiles but could have some ABM capability, especially against slower moving SLBMs and Pershing IIs.) The Moscow ABM system will be modernized and the network of Pechora class large phased array radars are estimated to be complete by 1987. The SH-4 and SH-8 missiles associated with the ABM system are reported to be in mass production, so elements of an ABM breakout are, in this account, reported "already visible."

Soviet defense spending is projected to increase between four and six percent annually in real terms based on evidence of production rates, factory expansion, test range expansion and deployments under way.

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